"The difference between the right and the nearly right word is the same as that between lightning and the lightning bug." Mark Twain

"The **title** to a work of writing is like a house's front porch.... It should invite you to come on in." Angela Giles Klocke

"You can't wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club." Jack London

"I'm not a very good writer, but I'm an excellent rewriter." James Michener

"The mere habit of writing, of constantly keeping at it, of never giving up, ultimately teaches you how to write." Gabriel Fielding

"Fill your paper with the breathings of your heart." William Wordsworth

Writers in Progress

2013-2014

Twentieth Anniversary Edition

"Imagination is more important than knowledge." Albert Einstein

"The art of writing is the art of applying the seat of the pants to the seat of the chair." Mary Heaton Vorse

"It is better to write a bad first draft than to write no first draft at all." Will Shetterly

"I keep six honest serving men
They taught me all I knew;
Their names are What and Why and When
and How and Where and Who."
Rudyard Kipling

"Proofread carefully to see if you any words out." Author Unknown

"Writing is an exploration. You start from nothing and learn as you go." E. L. Doctorow

"For me, writing is exploration; and most of the time, I'm surprised where the journey takes me." Jack Dann

"The only way to learn to write is to write." Peggy Teeters

"I rewrote the ending of 'Farewell to Arms' 39 times before I was satisfied." Ernest Hemingway

"Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass." Anton Chekhov

"**Show don't tell**." Henry James

Writers in Progress

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Frequently Asked Questions

...about *Writers in Progress (WIP)*

Q: What is the purpose of this book?

A: This book provides model essays for the assignments that your instructor may require you to write this semester.

Q: Who wrote these essays?

A: Previous students who have successfully completed Basic Writing.

Q: How are these essays chosen?

A: The essays in this reader were reviewed by a committee. Essays selected follow assignment guidelines and are organized and well developed. They are usually graded essays that have been polished again after the instructor's feedback.

Q: Do I have to write all of these essays?

A: No, not all of the essays will apply to you. Please follow your instructor's directions in regards to what essays you will need to write.

Q: Am I expected to write this well?

A: Students have revised these essays many times based on suggestions from peer reviewers, Writing Center tutors, and instructors. The *WIP* committee also proofreads and makes some final edits before publication.

Q: Should I add graphics to my essay?

A: Graphics are added to make *WIP* more visually appealing; however, graphics are not usually included in academic essays. Please see your instructor if you have questions about this issue.

Q: How can I submit my essay?

A: An instructor or writing tutor may suggest that you submit your essay if it is an excellent example of a particular assignment.

Devon Lofaro

Basic Writing

Object Essay

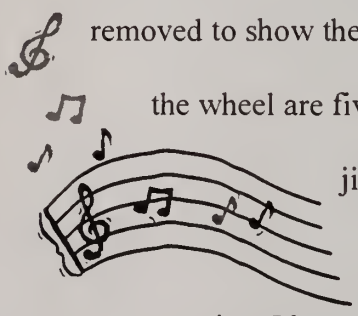
September 19, 2012

Little Box of Love

Intro.

I hear the sweet sound of childhood contained in my little wooden music box. The sound breaks free for a moment as it is opened. This burst of music sends me from my mundane life into a world of imagination and fantasy. Made of light wood, my music box is one of my most prized possessions; it was given to me by my stepfather who means the world to me.

The outside of the music box is crafted with a lighter shade of wood. It's very smooth but still has sharp edges. The top has two black squares where pictures can go in, but I have yet to find the perfect ones worthy enough to fill the emptiness. The inside of the box is entirely covered with black velvet which is very soft. There is one piece of black velvet that can be removed to show the sparkling golden wheel with risen bumps in various places. Next to the wheel are five golden rods that go over the bumps creating that soothing childish jingle that I love. The song that plays when you open the box is "You Light Up My Life". Overall, the box is small, light, and new. Over time I hope it will acquire that musty vintage smell wood often gets; then it will truly be priceless.



The day I got my music box was October 12, 2011. It was my birthday, and for the past decade or so I've gotten used to going out with my mother and stepfather for a nice quiet dinner on my birthday. After dinner would always be the same too; cake and presents back at the house. I don't expect a lot from them because they already do so much for me as it is. I had no idea

what I was going to open, but I had a square wrapped box sitting in front of me. I tore off the wrapping paper to reveal a cardboard box; with scissors I was able to uncover the music box. I was so happy to see that box; I had no words. When I opened it for the first time and heard its song I was even more at a loss for words. It was perfect in every way. The moment I received that music box from my stepfather I knew he was a true parent. Even though he isn't my real dad he showed that he cared and listened and loved me like a father should and he gave me the one thing I always wanted and cherished. "Do you like it?" my stepfather said.

"I love it!" I replied.

"I picked out the song, "You Light Up My Life," because that's what you honestly mean to me. I know you're not my daughter, but I'd like to think that you are."

"It's perfect," I said.

To anybody else a music box is just what it is, a box to put jewelry or little trinkets in and when opened music will play. To me a music box captivates my imagination. It sends me back to my childhood where the littlest thing would fascinate me. I'm emotionally attached to my music box, not only because it brings me back to my childhood, but also the person who gave it to me means a great deal to me. Unlike most step parents, my stepfather has been in my life since I was born and he's helped raise me like I was his own child. The fact that I was given the box makes me feel loved and cared for. It inspires me to return the favor and be eternally caring and loving to the people who matter most to me. It shows me that I'm worth caring about and that I can amount to something. My stepfather fills the gap that my father left behind.

My music box sits on a chest at the end of my bed. The chest is low to the ground and fits the length of my bed. On top of that chest I keep all my meaningful knick knacks from the places

I've traveled. The music box sits next to my conch shell from Key West and my hand carved wooden flower from Holland. I don't handle my music box very often. I may dust it as well as the other knick knacks from time to time, but that's about it. I keep all the pennies I've pressed as well as other pennies in my music box. On days that I'm feeling depressed or defeated I'll open my music box to hear that sweet joyful song.

My music box gives me comfort in difficult times. Two years ago in January I lost my Nana. It started out with just bad kidney stones and then took a turn for the worse. She was gone in just three months and she was the only grandparent I'd ever known. She, along with my mother and stepfather, raised me. I went to my nana's house every weekend until I was about eight. The day of her funeral was the worst day I've ever experienced. There was so much emotion on that day that when I got home all I wanted to do was stay in my room and never leave it again. I was just sitting in my bed with my thoughts and I happened to look over at my music box. I grabbed it and opened it up. I must have listened to its song a hundred times before I closed it again. The song it played helped me remember all the good times I had with my Nana growing up. I slept with my music box by my side that night and whenever I hear that song play I can't help but smile.

My music box gives me happiness. Whenever I need some cheering up I'll turn to my music box. It lets me know that I'm cared for and loved by the people who matter most to me and that I can do anything because I know I have their support. Without my music box I honestly believe that I wouldn't be as happy as I am today. In the future, I plan on using my music box whenever I feel down and need a little boost of happiness. Later on in life, I plan on passing down my little box of love to my children with the hope that it will also bring them happiness.

An Dang

Basic Writing

Object Essay

Spring 2010

Achievement

I was born in a country where eighty million people have a united interest in soccer. Nevertheless, I am now a new citizen of the USA. After my first chilly winter last year, I figured out that I can only go outside and play soccer at summer time. Fortunately, I had lived in my aunt's house for the first eleven months. I used to call her Mrs. Chi. She had a beautiful and shiny ping pong table. That was where I got my earliest ping pong paddle as a gift from my aunt. I have been practicing with it hundreds of times. With me, it is not just a regular paddle. My ping pong paddle is important to me because it teaches me that I can achieve everything with concentration, discipline, and hard work.

With a Butterfly brand name stamped as a logo onto both sides, my paddle is really an expensive one. It has two rubber sides, black and red. The reason for that is it will help me distinguish between different types of rubber used by my opponent. The core layer of my paddle called the blade, and its holder are made from a light brown wood. On the bottom of the holder, there's another metal Butterfly logo with pins. Its hard holder fits perfectly on my palm. That gives me a lot of confidence when I am practicing. I rarely smell my paddle, but after many practicing times, it has gotten a strong sweaty smell. The best thing about it is when every time I hit a ball perfectly, the paddle creates a sweet pop sound. At that moment, I can mentally taste my achievement.

Until now, I still remember the day I acquired my paddle. It was heavily snowing that morning. I was so bored and tired of staying inside the house since my family moved in. I missed my home in Vietnam. I missed my friends and my soccer team. Suddenly, my aunt came to my room and asked me to help her clean up the basement. When I came down I was stunned by the shiny ping pong table. Then I asked her to show me some moves and techniques. My aunt was an intense ping pong player. I fell in love with the sport right away. After that morning, my aunt told me, "You catch on very fast. Good Job! Now, I will let you use and practice with this paddle. It's yours." I couldn't express how happy I was to her. Finally, I had found something interesting to do in my spare time.

The ping pong paddle is basically used for batting balls. However, my paddle means more to me than just a practicing tool. It has taught me a new sport and given me a new inspiration. It makes me want to work hard to obtain more skills. It is like an exciting assignment I have every day. Now, after one year, my bat is not that new and shiny like it was. In competition, I have to use another new paddle to get the fundamental speed and spin. Nonetheless, there are several times when I have to face a new life hurdle and feel very insecure. I always come to my old bat and grasp it in my palm. That reminds me of all the hard work and perseverance I have put into ping pong. It makes my spirit rise strongly again, and after that my confidence comes back to me.

I usually keep all my important things in my school bag. I haven't had my own room since I was born. For twenty years, I have had to share the room with my brother. Honestly, he is the laziest and messiest creature in the world. Thus, my bag is the only place where he can't throw his stuff on. My bag is designed for storing a laptop and books. A laptop is a valuable

thing; that's why its holder is a pretty safe place. The holder has some special features that will prevent my paddle from being damaged.

After training, I often spray water onto both sides of my bat. That will protect the paddle from being itchy and retain the necessary speed when I hit a ball. Then I will use a cloth and gently clean the surfaces.

Together, my paddle and I have had a lot of memories. There is one story that I will never forget. It was the first day I came back to college. For the initial eight months in America, all that I had done was stay inside the house, play games, learn English, and practice ping pong. I felt lost when I walked inside the school, which was filled with all strangers. Fortunately, I found out that my college had two ping pong tables located inside our fitness center. I met Tim there, my first American friend. I took out my paddle and showed it to him. He was not a big fan of ping pong; like every American he loved baseball and basketball. However, Tim was impressed with my professional paddle, and he loved to spend time playing around the table. Since then, he and I have been engaged in that kind of recreation every lunch time. I have tried to teach Tim a lot about ping pong. In exchange, Tim has taught me many things about American culture. Now, I feel like a normal student, and not an outcast anymore.

I will always keep my ping pong paddle by my side. It's a symbol of my spirit. It is more like a best friend who always is there for me, supports me, and gives me the never-give-up spirit. Though I don't use it that much anymore, I will still always keep it close to me. My paddle has taught me a valuable lesson. In order to succeed, I need to work hard and concentrate fully on what I am doing. Little by little, I'll stick with my plan, and I'll score.

Iris Diaz

Basic Writing

Object Essay

Fall 2012

Love Story in a Charm

Who would have thought an object would have such a strong connection with my soul? My Pandora bracelet is my most treasured object. It's the first material thing my boyfriend has ever bought me. It's something I always wanted. Since he and I never had money to buy one another gifts on our anniversary this gift was a huge surprise. My Pandora bracelet plays a colossal role in my relationship with Juan, holding many memories and telling a love story we share.

It was March second, my birthday to be exact. My boyfriend and I hurried to the mall that afternoon to pick out outfits for my birthday party. I decided to stop in Pandora just like every other trip to the mall. I stopped to look at charms, bracelets, rings, and necklaces; it's something I always do. I wished to have them all someday, but knew it was just a tease to me. He watched me as I just paced around the store just dazing, getting lost in the diamonds. He always planned to buy my charm bracelet, a bracelet full of charms to tell our love story...that day he did. I had no idea it was his plan all along. I wondered why he was so eager to head to the mall that afternoon. My heart dropped as soon as he asked the sales associate to measure my wrist so I'd have a perfect fit.

It was the silver bracelet I always imagined, the type of material that pinched my skin whenever I moved my wrist a certain way, but that didn't matter. He knew exactly what charm I laid my eyes on as soon as we walked into the store. It was an oval shaped glass charm. It was

see through with four red lady bugs. Their eyes are so thick you can feel the circular bumps when you slide your finger across them. On the side of the charm read 925 Ale Pandora, so we knew it was handmade. Another one of my charms is named Open Heart. It's a silver open circle, with numerous amounts of hearts that you could see right into. I bought myself this charm. As we all know every relationship has its issues and hardships, so while we were going through ours I decided to pamper myself and buy one. The meaning behind Open Heart is although he and I were going through a rough time in our relationship, my heart was still open for him and my heart was still his and only his.

The plan is to tell our love story through each charm; we're just a corny couple. I only have a couple of charms so far. Each charm represents different situations we have been through or our favorite things as a couple. We've been together for three years and some change. Throughout those three years we've had amazing times and of course struggles. The way we met was odd, almost like it was just meant to be. It truly is a love story. I'm the luckiest girl being able to have a lover and best friend in one. My generation doesn't believe in true love; I guess I'm just old fashioned. Material things don't mean much to either of us. My bracelet is the only material thing that won my heart over. It's something that only we share. The bracelet is a reminder of our relationship and the times we've been through, as I said before, our love story.

I still remember the butterflies that flew in my tummy as he paid for it. I couldn't help but to smother him with kisses. For months and months I never removed my bracelet, I even took it in the shower with me at times until it broke. I then remembered the sales associate reminded me never to take it into the shower. I hurried to the mall hoping they'd fix it and so they did! We were both afraid it might happen again, so he bought me a jewelry box to keep it in. It's a

beautiful chocolate brown wooden box. It's such a big box for one small bracelet, but it keeps my bracelet safe. There's a gold lock right in the front that only I have the key to. Inside it has such soft, velvet red, silky fabric to lay my bracelet on. It's my favorite colors; he knew that.

In reflecting upon what my bracelet means to me, it holds so many memories, both good and bad. It's our first object that has held memory that he had bought for me himself. It's the only thing that makes me feel like he is always with me. It reminds me of the man that I have, the guy I always wanted. It's my most treasured object. We know not everything lasts forever, but I'm glad this is something I can take to my grave lasting a lifetime.

Ali St. Germain

Basic Writing

Time Capsule Letter

January 30, 2013

Dear Explorer,

Hello, my name is Ali St. Germain. Looks like you have found my time capsule I put together on January 30, 2013. It was an assignment my writing teacher had the entire class do. The purpose of the assignment was to gather four objects that are important to us. Let me explain a little about each object and why I chose it.

The first item is a picture of my parents and I. It is an average 4x6 size picture. I take most of my pictures with my cell phone, and this picture I had printed out at my house on regular white computer paper. The picture was taken at a family Christmas party on December 22, 2012 at a Holiday Inn in Boxborough, MA. I really like this picture because, not only are we all matching in black and red, but also it is rare to have my father in the pictures since he is usually the one taking them. I chose to put this picture in my time capsule because I believe family is the most important thing in life. I respect and appreciate my parents and everything they have done for me. I want this picture to show that I am a very family oriented person.

The second item is also a 4x6 size picture. This picture is of my Chihuahua Mia. It is slightly blurry because again, the picture was taken from my cell phone and printed out at my house. I got Mia when she was only eight weeks old. In this picture she is about three years old, and this was the one and only time she allowed me to put a sweater on her. I chose to put this picture in my time capsule because I

love her and she is my heart. If I am having a bad day, I always know Mia will make me smile. I want this picture to show that I am an animal lover and appreciate the bond between a dog and their owner.

The third item is a small, white, gold ring my boyfriend Zachary got me. It has a small, yet beautiful diamond on it. It also has two smaller diamonds on either side of the larger one decorating it just a little more. Zachary gave me this ring on our first Valentine's Day together. It was the first ring he had ever given me, and since the day he put it on my finger, I have never taken it off. I chose to put this ring in my time capsule because it is very special to me and represents my relationship with him. I want this ring to show that I value relationships between two people and am a true hopeless romantic at heart.

My fourth item is a small English-French dictionary. It is only about as long and wide as an average adult's hand. The colors on it are blue, white, and red, which are the colors of the French flag. I got this dictionary when I was about thirteen years old from a close friend named Perrine. Perrine is from France, and I met her here in America when I was only five years old. Eight years later Perrine moved back to France. Because we were such good friends, our parents made an agreement that every summer Perrine would come and stay with my family for a month, and then I would go back to France with her and stay at her family's house for a month. We did this for about seven years. I chose to put this English-French dictionary in my time capsule because it represents a large part of my past. I want this to show that I love Europe and the French language.

Now that you have seen all four of my items and learned why they are important to me, I would like to ask you a favor. Please hand out each item to four different people who you think has either a similar story or value. Read to them the short paragraph I have written about that item. It is up to that person what he or she decides to do with that item.

I appreciate you taking the time to read this letter and looking through the items in my time capsule.

Sincerely,

Ali St Germain

Allison Krikorian

Basic Writing

Person Essay

October 15, 2012

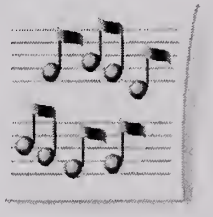
The Peaceful Piano Maker

Have you ever had someone in your life that you've looked up to? Have you ever wanted to be exactly like someone? For me, that person is my mom. My mom, Mary Linda Christine Good Krikorian, is my best friend, my inspiration, and my role model. She means the absolute world to me and she is the most amazing person I know. I feel so blessed to be her daughter. My mom is a positive, supportive, and outgoing person.

My mom is most at home playing the piano in our dining room. She sits on the piano bench just close enough to the piano so that she can see the music sheets, but far enough away so that her whole body is relaxed. Her light brown hair sits at rest on her head, but it's a bit messy. I can tell she didn't do much to it when she got out of the shower, but it still looks just as beautiful. Her dress stays still almost as if it doesn't want to disturb her. She sits tall and proud with her shoulders up high and her chest pushed out. Her posture is perfect. Her big blue eyes are constantly squinting to make sure she doesn't read the wrong notes. When she's playing, it's like she drifts off into her own little world. It's no use trying to talk to her while she's playing because she won't hear you. She hums along as she plays making sure she's on key. I don't think she realizes it, but she smiles when playing. Her smile makes others smile; it's kind of contagious. By looking at her smile, I can tell how happy she is and I can also tell how proud she is. She's modest so she tries not to let people see how proud she is of herself, but it peeks

through every now and then. I think she smiles while playing because she's remembering when she used to play for my grandpa. She would play and he would sing at the top of his lungs. They had a special bond and playing the piano brings back his face, his voice, and his presence. When she plays, her hands look like little dancers. They know where to go at exactly the right time. Her feet are always carefully placed, making sure she's pressing down on the correct pedal. My mom is great at a lot of things, but when she's at the piano she's the happiest. Wherever we go and there's a piano there, she sits right down and starts playing. It makes me happy because I know that when she's playing, even if I'm not looking at her, she's smiling.

My mom has gone through quite a few hardships in her life, yet somehow she always sees the good in everything. My mom's a music teacher and due to budget cuts, she got laid off last year from the Cashman School in Amesbury, MA. Just like anyone else would, she had a hard time coping with it. Music is her life and always has been. She decided to take a road less traveled by and be optimistic about the situation. She didn't know when, or even if she would land a job, but she kept telling herself and everyone else that things would work out. She did this because she didn't want to be sad, and she didn't want the people around her to be sad for her. She looked her best every day, forced a smile, and tried to be as happy and upbeat as possible. What she did paid off. She was recently hired for the music teacher position at Pentucket Lake in Haverhill, MA. I look up to her for being so positive all the time because no matter how bad things are, they could always be worse. I try and put on a smile every day, just like her, and focus on the positive things in my life instead of the negative. My mom inspires me to be a happier person.



No matter what choices and challenges I come across in my life, my mom supports me 100 percent. Becoming an adult has been a challenge for me. If it were up to me, I would stay

eighteen forever. I was really upset when high school ended. I chose to come to NECC because I wasn't ready to leave home, live on my own, and go to school full time. Being the only child, my mom was thrilled about this. When I started classes at NECC, it was too much for me to handle, but I kept my feelings in. I was taking four classes, but I only wanted to take two so I wouldn't be overwhelmed by the workload. My mom knew something was wrong so we went out to dinner at Krueger Flatbread, where I coincidentally work, and she was trying to understand why I was so upset. Like always, I was being stubborn and wasn't telling her what was wrong. She talked to me as calmly and as gently as she could. I finally got up the courage to tell her what was really on my mind. "Mom, four classes are too much for me. I think I'd be happier going to school part-time instead of full-time."

She told me, "Honey, whatever you want to do, I will back you up. You know that." She always says that as long as I'm happy, she's happy. After our talk, I decided that taking two classes was best for me. I'm so glad that my mom and I had a serious conversation about my classes. Now, only taking two classes, I am so much less stressed and I get to focus on the two most important classes, math and writing. Having a supportive mom like her makes me realize how lucky I am. I try and follow her ways and am more supportive to my friends and family now because of her. My mom has taught me that happiness comes first.

As I get older, I realize how outgoing and fun my mom is. She used to embarrass me when I was little, but now I want to be more like her so I try to break out of my shell as much as possible. As a little kid, I was always really shy. I rarely spoke to anyone, and it was hard for me to make friends. My favorite story of my mom being outgoing is when she moved to California not knowing a single person out there. She moved out there in her twenties because she had always aspired to go there, and she needed to get away from her family. She had no choice but to

be outgoing. If she was out at a bar or a restaurant and got a good vibe from someone, she'd start up a conversation with them. "Aren't there a lot of scary people out there though?" I asked my mom.

"Yes," she replied, "I didn't just go up to random people on the street though!" she jokingly said.

She made so many friends in no time, and most of those friends that she made 30 years ago are still some of her best friends today. I have realized that I become more and more like my mom each day. I'm such a people-person now and I will strike up a conversation with anyone. I'm happy she taught me to be this way because being outgoing is so much more fun than being quiet and shy.

I've learned a lot of things from my mom. Look both ways before crossing the street. Never talk to strangers. Always stick up for yourself. But the most important things I've learned from her have made me the person that I am today. I'm a happier, more outgoing, optimistic person, and I would not change that for the world. When I grow up, if I can be half of the woman that she is today, I'll consider myself beyond blessed. Each and every day I will continue to learn from my mom and each and every day I will make myself a better person because of her.

Teale A. Loveridge

Basic Writing

Person Essay

February 25, 2013

My Real Superman

Everyone has that one person you want to be like when you're older, that one person who you aspire to be like. Just like the little boys who dress and act like their favorite superheroes running around the house with a cape trailing behind. Who is that person for you? In my eyes there is only one person I truly admire and want to be like. That is my father, John Loveridge. He is, not only a father, but someone who possesses qualities such as being strong, motivated, reliable and personable.

My father, John Loveridge is a tall middle aged gentleman in his late 40's that has a very recognizable face and a moderately deep voice. The scent of Old Spice follows him as he walks past you. Most people can spot him a mile away, just by his eye patch. Patch has actually become his nickname and everyone knows him only by that. Even though he only has one eye, that one eye is a beautiful blue like the Caribbean sparkling under the blazing sun. The blue is accented by his recently turned grayish, silky to the touch hair to his scruffy beard. I can remember when I was little he used to rub his chin across the top of my head and it would itch. He is a very casual type of man that wears whatever is most comfortable to him. He is normally dressed in his old denim housework jeans and his black basketball sneakers, unless he is headed to work, then he would be in his button up collared shirt, sweater vest, and nicer jeans with his same basketball sneakers. He may be self-conscious about his

crooked over-lapping teeth, but that doesn't stop him from having the biggest smile run across his face.

The quality I admire the most about my father is his strength. He has gone through a lot since being a child. At seventeen, he enrolled in the Marines and didn't get to graduate with his senior class. Later on, while still active in the military, he was the center of a terrorist attack overseas. His strength proved him to be a survivor. As he grew older, he's gone through concurring deaths of his close family members. Growing up I never saw my father cry. The first

time I ever saw him cry was at my grandfather's funeral. Most would say this was his weakest moment, but I believe it was his strongest. He let down his guard and showed his emotions knowing he had his family right by his side. When things get tough in my life, I just look back on the hard times my father endured and that gives me strength to continue on.

During my lifetime, I've only come across a few people who were as motivated as my father. In life you go through struggles, and my father's struggle was to overcome an addiction. You never understand how hard that is unless you go through it or are around it. For fourteen years of my life I knew my father as an alcoholic; I am only twenty one. After his worst downfall he decided it was time to "become a man" in his words. The sounds of sirens flowed down the street as my mother yelled, "Get in the car!"

"NO! What's going to happen to daddy?" my brother and I whined.

Not knowing what to say she replied, "He'll be okay. He's going to get help. He'll be better now."

"I want to go with daddy!" my brother yelled.

My mother angrily stated, "Listen to what I'm telling you to do!" It took a week in jail to make him become motivated again. His motivation helped him survive and conquer something that would eventually kill him. He was motivated to become a better person for not only himself but for his family too. His life lessons have taught me to never give up on anything.

My father is the most reliable person I know. I can truly count on him for anything. I know if I am ever in trouble or need someone I can call my dad. When we first moved to Lawrence I was being picked on by teenagers. I didn't know what to do or where to turn since I was a little girl. I decided to tell my dad about the situation and he said, "I got your back!" The next day I saw my father chasing after the group of kids who were making fun of me with our family dog. I can still hear their screams of fear. From that day I knew I could rely on my dad for anything. He inspires me to be as reliable as he is.

Although it sometimes may be annoying, the thing I love most about my father is that he is personable. You can't walk down the street without someone trying to start a conversation with him. I'm not recognized as me, but as "Patch's daughter". I don't like going to the supermarket with him just for this reason. I can't recall a time where I didn't hear someone yelling "Patch" and flinging their arms to get his attention from seven rows down in Market Basket. At those moments, I knew our quick shopping trip would turn into an hour just from his talking. His personable quality has taught me to be friendly to everyone and help those who need it.

My father, my superman, may have qualities that annoy me at times such as him being personable; but his always admirable qualities like his strength, motivation and reliability make it

easy to look up to him. I may be twenty one years old, but I look up to my father like a five year old boy who is dressed in a cape to look like superman. His qualities are those I desire to have when I grow into my own person because they will help me be a better person.

Naizabeth Vega

Basic Writing

Person Essay

September 26, 2012

Birth Giver

Have you ever met someone who motivates you to do well? How about someone who has influenced you in a positive way to become a better person? Well, I have and this person is my mother! My mother is the person I aspire to be someday, perhaps even better. Almost everything she does, whether it's beneficial to me or others, just makes me feel special to have her in my life. My mother is not only the best mom, but she is also lovable, independent, and very generous.

According to my friends my mother is my "twin." We even almost have the same name. My mom's name is Maribeth. She is forty three years old but looks like she is in her mid-thirties. My mother is short and petite. She weighs 115 pounds and is five foot two inches. My mom has dark brown eyes, which can be confused as almost black. Somehow my mother's smile overpowers her little lips. She has little lips but is always smiling as big as the Kool-Aid Man. Anyone can spot my mom a mile away because of her poofy, curly, blonde hair. She usually has her hair curly, but when she blow dries it her hair is as nice as a Barbie doll's hair. Besides my mother's hair standing out, when people first meet my mom they notice her long acrylic nails. Her real nails are almost as along as her fake ones. Since my mother is Christian, most of the time she wears long skirts and light makeup. She carries her

Bible with her at all times inside her big black purse which she takes every day before leaving the house. She also sprays her favorite fragrance called Tresor, making her

scent smell like a delicate yet elegant whisper of peaches mixed with roses.

My mom does not care if one of my friends is around; she still hugs, kisses and tells me she loves me. She doesn't get embarrassed to show her love as a mother and always tells me, "You shouldn't be embarrassed as well if I kiss you in front of anyone. I'm your mother!" Since I can remember, my mom has always been a lovable mother. She gives me advice when I need it and a hug or kiss without me even asking for one. I remember recently my mom had noticed how sad I was about not having enough money to attend college. She hugged me and told me everything happens for a reason and that I would still be successful. She also told me she would be there for me and that everything would be all right. After giving me an hour long of advice, I felt better. Another time I remember my mom showing her lovable quality was with my cousin. He was going through a rough time in his life, and my mom took her time to sit down with him and talk. She gave him advice and showed him the love of an aunt that he needed from a mother.

They cried together and had a long conversation. At the end, my mom hugged and kissed him, ending the conversation with an "I love you." Besides being lovable, my mom always knows the right words to say when someone is in need of love, advice, or in need of guidance. Growing up with such a lovable mom has influenced me to be as lovable as her with my future children, and also with the people that matter in my life.

If the dictionary was invented by me I would put my mother's name (Maribeth Cruz) next to the word independent. My mom is the definition of the word independent. She is a hardworking, single mother of three. She pays the rent, bills, my little brother's private school, the car insurance, and still manages to provide food in our refrigerator. I honestly have no idea how my mom does it! Throughout my mother's struggles and accomplishments, she has proven that she does not need a guy in her life as a husband to provide for the things she has done on her

own. She has also proven that she doesn't need the government's help to get her through life. My mom works incredibly hard and even after working forty hours a week, sometimes working overtime, she comes home to clean the house. My mom doesn't depend on my brothers and I to clean the house. She is very picky and has her certain ways of cleaning the house. My mother never made my brothers and me do chores. The only things we have to do are the dishes and our room because she takes care of every other chore in the house. I can't ask for a better mom! I believe my mother's independence runs through my genes as well because I have been independent all my life. Starting from when I was a kindergartener up until the age I am now, I remember my mother never sat with me to help me on homework or projects because I would always do it on my own. When I turned sixteen I got my first job. Then as soon as I turned seventeen I got my permit and license and got a new job to save up for my first car. Before turning eighteen I already had my very own car and was helping my mom pay car insurance. She has greatly influenced me to work hard at what I want in life and most of all without anyone's help.

Generosity is a quality my mother has never lacked. Sometimes I think generosity runs through her blood. "Se me rompe el corazon" (My heart breaks in pieces) is what my mom always says when she sees a homeless person asking her for money. My mom always gives money or buys food whenever a homeless person asks her for money. Whether they really need it to eat or use it on drugs or alcohol, my mom feels so bad that she never fails to deny them the amount they ask for. I call my mother the "cab lady" because she is always giving or offering people rides. Not only is my mom the "cab lady," but in the past my mom has been what I call a "bank." There was this one time when my mom let my aunt borrow a huge amount of money and never cared if she had paid her back or not. "Money isn't everything, it comes and goes" and

"Give to get back" are my mother's two favorite sayings. She also says that if you have the money lend it to the person in need because you never know if you can be in that situation. I may not be like my mom when it comes to letting people take advantage of her generosity, but her being a generous person at heart in general has influenced me. Now, I give money or buy food for homeless people in need, also I give people rides like my family members or close friends. Most of all, I've learned that money isn't everything in this world.

My mother has influenced my life in many positive ways, and I love her for that. Being lovable, independent, and generous aren't even half of the qualities that make her this amazing person. She has shown me the love some children don't get from their mother, how not to depend on anyone else but myself, and how to genuinely give to others to receive back. My "birth giver" (what I call my mom), has inspired me to be a better person. I look up to my mother and hope to be half the woman she is.

Kayla Barry

Basic Writing

Strengths Essay

October 11, 2012

Adaptable, Futuristic, and Empathetic

Many people know their strengths and weaknesses immediately. Some only feel they have weaknesses and not any strengths. In my college success class, we took this online quiz called StrengthsQuest™. Your strengths are determined by how you answer multiple questions on various situations. After I received my results, I was surprised at first. Although once I read the description of each individual strength, I felt that the results were completely accurate. All of these strengths help me in many different aspects of my life. Not all strengths affect others in positive ways. Sometimes certain strengths clash with one another and cause arguments or disagreements. This is the negative side to having certain strengths. My top three strengths were adaptability, futuristic, and empathy.

The first strength I have is adaptability. A person who has this quality is easily able to handle unexpected tasks or demands. Adaptable people see the future not as a fixed destination, but something that is created by the choices you make. This trait has especially helped me this year. I have just started my freshman year in college. It is a whole new set of rules, responsibilities, and atmosphere. The amount of homework you do in high school compared to

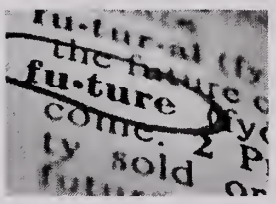
the homework you get in college is something every student must adapt to. For some people, who do not have this strength, it could seem very overwhelming and difficult to adjust. I feel that without this strength it would have been harder to handle the homework, make new friends, and adjust to the newfound freedom as a college

student. Being adaptable has also helped me as a young child. When I was younger my family moved back and forth from Orlando, Florida to here in Haverhill, Massachusetts quite often. I was constantly changing schools, apartments, and neighborhoods. Even though we were always on the move, I was still able to make friends from all the different schools I attended. Although after making these new friends, it was hard to leave them behind when we would leave.

My second strength I received was futuristic. By being futuristic, I constantly think about the "what ifs" or how my future, as well as others, will look like. Futuristic people like to envision the future in great detail, although the future for us is constantly changing. This strength keeps me positive when life gets rough. My friends always ask me how I see them living like in five, ten or fifteen years. I love to create these scenes of others' lives in my head and give them my opinion. Last week, I was spending time with my friend Monica, and we were talking about our futures. She asked me, "Kayla, where do you see me living in like three years?"

I replied, "I'm not sure. Maybe somewhere urban like Boston or California."

"Oh, I'd love to live in California. It's so beautiful out there. I hope I end up there someday," she said. We continued to discuss all the possible scenarios of where she could live, what her husband might look like and even how many children she may or may not have. Conversations like these are my favorite to discuss. These types of conversations give me a sense of joy and happiness. I enjoy imagining, daydreaming, and visualizing the future for myself as well as everyone around me.



My third strength is empathy. Empathy is the ability to perceive others' feelings as if they were your own. Many people confuse empathy for sympathy. When you feel empathy for someone, you do not feel pity for them unlike if you had sympathy. Without this strength, I feel I wouldn't have the close friendships I do. One of my friends broke up with her first love this past

year. It was a very rough time for her. As one of her close friends, I was not only there for her in her time of need, but I felt her emotions of heartache and sorrow deeply. If she cried, I'd feel the pain of her tears, and a majority of the time I'd end up crying with her. Sometimes I get too involved with other people's emotions and take their pain or sorrows as if they were mine. This is the negative side of being too empathetic. I let my emotions get the best of me sometimes. After her breakup, there was a period of time where her boyfriend tried to get back with her. Since I was too involved with her best interests, I became upset about her willingness to take him back so easily after he had broken her heart; because of this we had a couple of arguments as to why I was so angry about it. Empathy also gives me the unyielding understanding of any situation. This quality allows me to give hope in the darkest of times. I can always find the right words of comfort or advice for those who need it. My closest friends, especially, I can feel their emotions deeply and can easily get submerged in a tidal wave of emotions.

At first I thought this quiz was going to be pointless or some silly starter activity for the class, but it wasn't. I am so happy that I put all my effort into honestly answering each of the questions. I feel the results, especially my top three strengths of adaptability, futuristic, and empathy, were beyond accurate for who I am as a person. Knowing these strengths gives me a better idea of what I may or may not want to pursue in the future. This quiz helped me realize that I do have strengths and that I do have talents. Also, by becoming aware of these strengths I can develop them even more. These strengths have given me a confidence boost. I feel more inspired and focused that I can have a bright future ahead of me due to learning that I am adaptable, futuristic, and also empathetic. It has given me a better sense of who I can be as a person in the very near future.

Andrew Svenson

Basic Writing

Narrative Essay

October 16, 2012

The Jam Effect

"Dude, get the hell up!" A voice awoke me while I was uncomfortably asleep in my small tent, next to Montez. "If you're late I'm going to punch you in the face Svenny!" The same voice proclaimed. I rubbed my eyes and started to put on my boots. The heat was already scorching hot, and it had to be only a little past six in the morning. This was a common morning time event for me in Djibouti, Africa. I could hear the waves smashing against the rocks as I unzipped the door to my tent. I smiled and gave out a small chuckle as I saw a goat standing next to a tree, just a couple of feet away. A peaceful goat eating grass and staring at me was probably the least of my concerns I would have today from the event that was to take place.

"What are you laughing about kid?" Montez said as he too began to slip his boots on. Montez is a couple years older than me, with dark black hair and brown eyes, typical for a Hispanic. "Bro what time is it?" First I'm some kid and now he considers me his brother? It must be the 90 percent humidity messing with his head again.

"It's 6:15, and that stupid goat is still by that damn tree out here." I finished putting my bulletproof vest on and grabbed my rifle. Already dripping with sweat, I poured a canteen worth of water over my head. It was our idea of a daily shower, seeing there is no running water where we were.

Knowing Montez would eventually show up to our assigned post, I started to head over to it alone. The post is about a five minute walk away from my tent, so on the way I ate a power bar for breakfast. Still half asleep, the walk seemed like it had never happened, and only having a power bar in my stomach it seemed like I haven't ate either.

When I arrived at my post the two Marines I was relieving just nodded their heads and walked away. Montez arrived shortly after me; he carried a towel in his hand to wipe sweat off his forehead. With all our gear on and rifles at hand, we were prepared for anything that came our way, or were we?

Halfway through our post a vehicle slowly crept up to us. Inside was an older gentleman driving. His wife was in the front passenger seat, with his two sons sitting in the back. The man rolled down his window of his old Ford Explorer and shouted, "Hey you!"

"Can I help you?" I was already confused about why he was here, but his next words really got me puzzled.

"Yes, I want to go swimming at beach, with family!" The man was still shouting at me. I looked behind me at the beach to make sure the tanks and other vehicles were still there. Yes, they were still there being guarded by a hundred or so men with rifles.

"I'm sorry sir, but I think the beach is out of service today. You are not allowed to enter this area."

"No, you ask your commander if I go to beach!" The man seemed eager to go to this particular beach. I didn't see why, it was just a regular beach with barely any sand to begin with, not to mention infested with a lethal force of our finest military members.

"Alright, I will ask just for you pal!" Already knowing what my commander would say, I asked anyways just to make this troubled man happy and leave.

"Echo-seven-bravo, this is post one, come in."

"Send it for, echo-seven-bravo."

"Be advised I have one vehicle and four persons requesting permission to enter the beach."

"Roger, are they military?"

"That's a big negative, they are civilian."

"They are not clear to enter post one." The commander's words were loud enough over the radio that the man in the vehicle could hear him.

"Sorry buddy, now get out of here." I pointed towards the direction he came and stared into his eyes with a stern look. The man began to back his vehicle up. I knew something was wrong when I heard the vehicle stop and all of a sudden I could hear dirt being flung around.

As I looked up, the vehicle was racing towards my post at full speed. My reaction was what I was trained to do. My rifle quickly rose up, and I sighted in on the driver. I squeezed the trigger but something was wrong. Just a click sound was heard; my rifle was jammed. "All posts, all posts, be advised. Vehicle ran post one!" I continued to shout those words on my radio.

The vehicle made it to post two before being stopped. All across the beach I could see Marines running towards the vehicle with their weapons aimed at it. The four passengers were tossed out of the vehicle and thrown down to the ground. The four of them had to be the luckiest people alive at that moment.

Later on, the four were released; they were questioned and held as detainees for several hours. This incident occurred halfway through my first deployment. It was the first time I had to

aggressively attempt to use my rifle. We did not know at the time if the family really wanted to go to the beach or if inside the vehicle was an explosive. It turned out it was just a very determined and grumpy old man trying to go to the beach.

I still wonder sometimes if I dealt with the situation the right way. What if my rifle had not jammed, would I have been justified for the following actions that would take place? Different scenarios constantly play through my head; I will never forget that hot summer day in Djibouti, Africa. Ever since that moment I would always recheck my gear every chance I had. What if this happened at a time of life and death, I would be at fault.

Chris Vasquez

Basic Writing

Narrative Essay

November 8, 2012

Be History or Be Part of History

I remember that one freezing day in the fall last year when the weather was unbelievably cold, but the weather didn't stop us from doing what needed to be done. It was my senior year of high school and possibly my last cross country race of my career. This was the big meet. This was the Division II Class B State Meet. The meet was taking place over at Franklin Park in Boston. Our objective as a team was to bring a banner home and hang it up on the school wall. This was something that hasn't been done in over ten years. The last time a banner was brought to our school was in 1994. This was something I wanted to accomplish. That year I was selected as one of the captains of the Central Catholic Raiders Cross Country Team. As much as that moment meant to me, that day doesn't compare to what happened to us at the state meet.

It all started on that Saturday morning. I woke up from a great night of sleep. I slept about eight to nine hours that night because I knew how important the next day was. I had a great breakfast that my mom made for me. She cooked me an egg, ham, and cheese sandwich. I remember my coach telling us, "All of you guys, get some sleep. I'm talking about at least eight hours of sleep and eat a big meal for breakfast because tomorrow, you're giving them HELL."

The team, including me, responded by just screaming out loud because the coach had got us all pumped up for the race. I took the coach's advice though and slept eight to nine hours and ate a big meal. I felt so relaxed but I was pumped at the same time because this is what we were

all training for since day one. We all knew how important that event meant for us. I remember the day before the state meet; I pulled the team aside from the coach because I had something to say to them. I had told them, "Guys, we trained too hard all season long for us to come out empty handed. We all know what needs to be done, so let's go out there tomorrow and show them what we are about. I don't wanna be history; I wanna be part of history."

As a team, we all put our hands in and said, "Raiders on three. One…two…three RAIDERS!"

That same Saturday morning, the team met up at school around 7:00 a.m. and the bus was leaving at 7:30 a.m. The coach pulled the three captains aside, me and two of my friends. He pulled us three aside and then pulled us out individually. He had pulled me aside first and said to me, "Vasquez, it has been a pleasure having you on the team for the past three years and it has been a pleasure having you as a captain of the team. You did a great job being a leader of the team and being a role model for the freshmen and new incoming runners. Congratulations on making it this far. Now go out there and show them what you are made of."

I responded, "Thank you coach. This all really means a lot to me. I wouldn't be in this position right now if it wasn't for you. You never gave up on me. You've seen something in me since freshman year and kept pushing me to work harder. I appreciate that a lot coach. It has been a pleasure having you as not only a coach, but as a friend as well. I won't let you down."

My coach had then responded with a smile on his face, "Oh, I know you won't let me down. You better not let me down."

My coach and I had then laughed with each other and after hugged each other and he went off to talk to the other captains. Him speaking to me brought back so many memories; from day one as a freshman all the way to my senior year as a captain. I just kept remembering all the hard work I put into practice and the other meets to be where I am right now.

Throughout the bus ride over to Franklin Park in Boston, I was lying down and listening to my favorite song, "The Second Coming" by Juelz Santana. This song always motivates me to never give up. No matter how hard the struggle is, no matter how many times you fall, you pick yourself back up and keep trying. One verse I repeat in my head over and over again is, "If you fall, get up and try it again." This just shows to never give up. Keep trying, no matter how many times it takes for you to do it. I listened to that song from the moment we got on the bus until we arrived at Franklin Park. I wasn't the only one listening to music though. The rest of my fellow teammates were listening to music as well. Some were sitting down and some were lying down, but all of us were listening to music getting ready for the race of our lives.

When we finally arrived at Franklin Park, the coach had a few words to say, basically telling us that we are going to go for a two mile warm up and then stretch afterwards. During the warm up, I was singing the song in my head. I heard the song so many times that I know each and every verse of the song. I was getting in the zone because this race meant so much to me. It has been eighteen years since the last time the cross country team at Central Catholic brought a banner to the school. I wanted this more than anything.

After we finished our warm up, we all stretched as a team and just hung out for a few because we still had about another hour until the race started. We just hung out on the bus because it was a very chilly day. None of us wanted to get stiff after a good warm up run. The last fifteen minutes before the race we all ran to warm up our bodies again and did small sets of

stretching. Our coach had always told us in the past from my freshman year that it isn't good to be overly stretched.

The start of the race was just minutes away. All seven of us were at the starting point getting ready for the race of our lives. Before every race, we always pray as a Central Catholic tradition. We prayed the Hail Mary. It was a tradition that has been done since the first day Central Catholic was built so we weren't going to stop that tradition.

The race was now seconds away. We were all just waiting for the gun to go off to start the race. Next thing you know, BOOM! The gun goes off and the start of the race begins. Over three hundred runners were on the 3.1 mile course giving there all so I knew this was wasn't going to be easy. Some areas throughout the course were crowded so everybody is pushing, shoving, throwing elbows, doing anything possible just to pass the next guy. The way I run, I lock eyes on one guy at a time. I see the person I want to pass, I pass him and move on to the next guy. I can hear the crowd going crazy, screaming at everybody to keep it moving and don't give up. You can feel the vibe right off the start of the race and the intensity keeps building up.

Throughout the race, besides hearing all the crazy fans from the other teams, I can hear the fans of my school cheer for me. "Keep pushing Chris, you can do it! Don't give up. PUSH! As each person cheered for me, I moved up running faster and faster. I was in physical pain

because running 3.1 miles at race pace is not an easy task. I wanted to stop running because I was so tired, but I knew I had to keep pushing myself. I couldn't let my teammates down, I couldn't let my coach down, I couldn't let the people cheering for me down, but most importantly, I couldn't let myself down. With the help of the crowd cheering for me, I was passing people left and right, not holding up for anybody. The last straightaway of the race was always my favorite part of the

course because I was one of the fastest sprinters on the team. I would fly by and pass so many people. When I reached the last straightaway, the intensity of the crowd skyrocketed and felt like I had jets on my feet. I passed so many people and none could catch up to me. I finally crossed the finish line and finished the race.

As we were all waiting for the results, we got together as a team and just waited patiently until our coach came back with the final results. The final result didn't come as we planned. We did not win States, but we accomplished something that hasn't happened in twenty years. We qualified for All-States! We had hit the wild card coming in at fifth place as a team. The coach came back telling us that we ran the best race as a team. He was proud of us no matter what the results were.

I had never seen so many happy faces before in my life. Not only were my teammates and the coach happy, but my teammates' parents were happy as well. That moment couldn't have felt any better. My parents came to the meet to support me and the team as well. My parents only went to two of my meets, my junior year against Lawrence High and my senior year in the State Meet. I wasn't expecting them to come to the race but they knew how important this day was for me, so they came to cheer us on. My parents were so proud of me that morning. I can't remember the last time they had a smile on their faces like the way they had that day. Seeing them proud of me for all my hard work and effort I put into that race couldn't have made me any happier.

Being part of history was all I asked for. As much as I wanted to win a banner and put it on the school wall in the gym, I was more than happy that we qualified for All-States. At the end of the day, the feeling of making and being a part of history just uplifted me. I learned a lot about myself that day. I realized how strong minded I can be. When I have my mind set on something,

I can do it. That race helped me in my life because when I feel like something is impossible, I think back to that day of the race, how hard I ran and how I never gave up. The same way I didn't give up during the race, I will not give up in life. In her book *Life Lessons*, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross wrote, "From the beginning to the end, life is a school, complete with individualized tests and challenges" (221). I had to challenge myself and test myself to see if I have what it takes to accomplish something. I proved myself that day that I have what it takes to make it happen in life. To this day, I know the coach could not be any happier than how he was that day. He succeeded as a coach, and we succeeded as a team.

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Margaret Larouche

Basic Writing

Narrative Essay

November 7, 2012

The Day My Heart Shattered

The sun hadn't risen yet, and it was cold, so cold that a jacket needed to be worn. It was a late September morning in interior Alaska and winter was on its way. My husband Jake and I loaded up the car with his duffel bags and began to drive. We didn't say much during the twenty minute car ride, but we spent the entire time soaking up each other's presence. We only had a few more hours to spend together. Little did I realize that on this day, I would feel an intensity of emotion like never before.

As we reached our destination, through the darkness, the only visible light was coming from a green and beige building. There were men buzzing in and out of the building like bees working in a hive. The parking lot was filled to the brim with the vehicles of Jake's fellow soldiers and their families. We found one of the few available parking spots, parked the car, and then proceeded to unload all of Jake's gear. He ran into a few of his co-workers outside and had a brief conversation with them about the day's events as they were smoking a quick cigarette. When they finished talking, I helped him carry his bags to the building. As we entered the building, the pervasive scent of chemicals from the previous day's cleaning filled the air. We walked roughly twenty feet and reached the set of double doors that led to the building's loading area. Once they were opened, we were greeted by the chatter of at least one hundred people and mountains of green duffel bags. Some of those people were visibly fighting back tears, while

hugging and kissing their spouses. Others were busy giving orders and prepping for departure.

After Jake dropped off his gear we were able to settle in and be together for a little while. His co-workers, who also happened to be our friends, found us and we all hung out together before the guys had to make their way to the arms room to sign out their weapons. I followed them and waited, sitting on the cold concrete floor outside the arms room. I sat waiting for close to an hour, or so it seemed, for Jake to finally reappear. When he finally finished signing out his weapon he was called to help with another detail and asked me to watch his rifle. At this point I knew that the minutes were more precious than ever. I was aggravated that they kept pulling him away from me and making him do stupid little tasks that weren't imperative. I thought to myself, *I'm here! My husband is deploying today, for twelve months in Iraq and he's not spending time with me! He's leaving in an hour, and I've barely been able to see him! It's just not fair!* When he finally appeared again he informed me that he was being forced to help load the gear onto the buses. My heart sank and I could feel the tears welling up. This was it; we were really going to have to part ways for real.

Jake didn't want me to wait until they were boarding the buses because he thought it was unfair for me to wait alone while he was loading the gear. He said to me, "Maggie, I love you, but I want you to go home. I can't spend any time with you, and all you'll be doing is waiting to see me get on the bus. You've been awake for almost twenty four hours, and I don't want you to be too tired to drive." I felt my throat close up, and I could barely utter any words.

"All right," I said begrudgingly, "but I really don't want to."

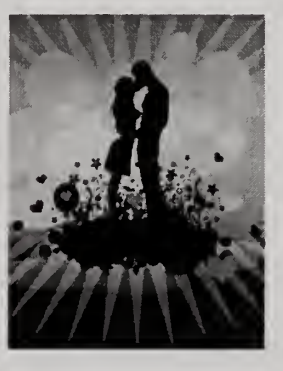
"Mags, I love you more than anything," he said as we were walking back to the car.

"I love you too, but please don't go," I pleaded.

"You know I have to," he said with a defeated tone in his voice.

We stood there for a while just looking at each other. We both smoked a cigarette trying to stretch what little time we had left.

Then the time had come for us to say goodbye and I felt an oppressive lump forming in my throat. I stared at Jake's face trying as hard as I could to memorize every possible detail. He kissed me and then we embraced. An ominous sensation began to overtake my body and one searing question was being raised in my mind. Was this the last time I'm going to see my husband alive? Such a morbid thought to have, but it was the honest truth. I had no idea if I was going to see him again, as he was being shipped off to war for a year. What were the odds that something wouldn't happen? He hugged me for as long as he could and then it was time for him to get back to work. I got into my car and gave him one final kiss, and then I watched him walk back into the building. I turned on the ignition, threw my car into gear and began my drive home. The second I got out of the parking lot and onto the road my vision was blurred by the tears welling up into my eyes. I got approximately a half mile down the road before I was overtaken with grief. For safety's sake, I decided to pull my car over to the shoulder of the road. *I just said goodbye to my husband for possibly the last time*, I thought. *Please let him stay safe because I have no idea what I'm going to do if I lose him.* I spent a few minutes sobbing in the car before I received a phone call from a friend of ours who was deploying later that same day. We were holding a tote full of his things at our house, and he needed to have it back before he left. He asked when I could drop it off and I told him that I could right away, as I was only down the street. I drove over to the barracks and gave him his things. We hugged each other and I said to him, "Please stay safe." He promised he would do his best, and we parted ways.



The barracks were located behind the company where Jake worked, and I didn't see

anyone outside loading the buses. I decided to pick up my cell phone and call Jake to see if he was busy. When he answered, I told him about the errand I ran and asked him if I could get one more hug. He agreed, and I drove back to the company. He met me outside; we kissed and embraced for the final time. It was a brief, fleeting moment and then I had to leave. After a difficult drive with tears blurring my vision I made it home. My dog greeted me at the door and we went upstairs to bed. I cuddled him and cried for about a half hour. "One day down," I murmured before I finally fell asleep.

The day my husband deployed changed how I viewed all of my relationships. In her book *Life Lessons*, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross wrote, "When we face the worst that can happen in any situation, we grow" (25). Having to face the very real possibility of losing my husband forced me to grow as a person. I realized that I couldn't take anyone for granted anymore. Jake made it back safely in 2009, and I made a pact with myself to enjoy our time together to its fullest. There have been times that I've slipped up since, but I always remind myself that he could be deployed. Or worse, he could have lost his life. After, I quickly change my thought process and my attitude. Life is too short and you should always treat others well, because you truly never know if the last time you saw that person will be the final time.

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Megan MacPherson

Basic Writing

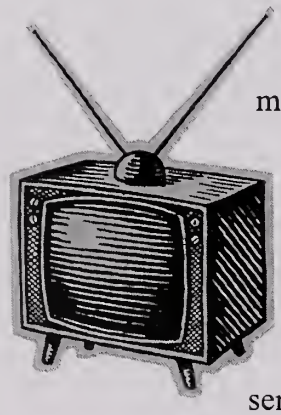
Media Essay

November 29, 2012

The Babysitter

"Surely one of the most visible lessons taught by the twentieth century has been the existence, not so much of a number of different realities, but of a number of different lenses with which to see the same reality." This quote from Michael Arlen on the subject of television best exemplifies how I also view the medium of television. It's a medium of art that allows you to enter situations you may not have experienced otherwise, learn from them, and then apply them to your personal life and experiences. Television has been a form of escapism from daily life, a way to create social bonds with friends and family, and an inspiration to further my education.

I can escape into not necessarily a different reality but a different world when I watch television. Biker gangs, cooking competitions, and literal demons all come to life on a week-to-week basis through TV shows and offer a fantastical life experience I might not have a chance to experience on my own. Since the advent of DVRs and Netflix I prefer to watch shows in marathon form waiting for multiple seasons to be produced first, allowing myself to be fully immersed in these characters' lives. It's like an extremely cheap vacation I can go on from my busy life without actually having to rearrange my schedule or recant on future obligations. I actually just started watching a new reality show about tattooing. The artists on the series talk to their clients about their reasons for getting their tattoos, and through their stories, I have found personal inspiration on how to interact with and treat my



loved ones. TV can be a momentary break from obligations that allows you to regroup and unwind without adversely impacting your day or wallet.

Television also allows for a way to easily create a social bond with friends and family through a shared appreciation of a certain program; a connection that may not have been immediately obvious to you before you realized you were into the same genres. I can recall having very important and extremely serious conversations with my siblings over which Saturday cartoon we would get to watch, a debate that usually ended with my sisters and me adhering to my brother's option. When I was a child it drove me crazy that us older siblings would have to give in on our shows and watch *Batman* or *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Looking back on it now, it was a way for us to show our brother that even though we had a special bond as sisters, and he was the youngest; we were still interested in him and what he had to say. It was an easy way to bond with our brother while still having fun. At the end of the day, we were kids who still got to watch hours of cartoons regardless of the content. I've also noticed looking back that his choice in cartoons aged much better than ours did, and that we still love to get together and watch all the new adaptations the shows have taken and discuss which interpretation is better. Television allowed us to bond much like it does for others, in a shared experience that can bring to light different social dynamics within your own group.

In addition, a TV show can be credited for me going back to school this year. My mother decided to sell her liquor store last year, but because of all the legal hoops and red tape the city of Lawrence made her go through, she ended up having to lay off her employees while the licensing was stalled. It was all familial hands on deck that year, and I would spend up to twelve hours a day at the store. With the stock down and business slow, I was able to marathon an entire nine season long television show called *Scrubs* through YouTube on my phone during my night

shifts. This is a show about a new doctor and his roommate, a fellow surgeon, starting their residency and the experiences they went through. It was a half hour comedy so it was easy to watch in bursts between customers. At first it was very much like other shows, an escape from reality, but over the months I was able to see through the bombastic humor and see the very real lessons these characters learned and the amazing opportunities and experiences the medical field had to offer. The last season transitions new characters in. Watching new characters go through similar situations as the original cast, but also showing their own interpretation of it, inspired me to really look into the medical field myself and to register for classes at NECC. *Scrubs* is a show that to some was just a half hour of comedy, but to me it was a half hour in which I could see a possible career. Neither viewing is necessarily wrong they are just different scopes of the same work. Television can inspire different people in multiple ways so long as they are open-minded to what they are watching.

On the contrary, how much access to and time spent on watching TV should be monitored. Television can feed into procrastination, especially if you are starting a new show with multiple seasons like *Doctor Who*. You can delve into character drama and their crises instead of acknowledging your own, resulting in an overdue assignment at school or a shoddy work performance while on the job. Furthermore, it can be used as an inadvisable babysitter to too busy or apathetic parents. It's a medium that left unchecked can negatively impact the development of children and how they interact with their peers and adults. Television should be viewed as a privilege once you have accomplished your daily tasks and not as a black hole that will erase your problems.

Television allows me to disconnect and recharge from my daily obligations, build connections with loved ones, and can inspire me to reach for and explore new life experiences. Still television should be moderated to an enjoyment and not a daily requirement. Television is a medium that is constantly growing and adapting to the culture and society it reflects upon. It is a form of art that can connect different generations to a shared experience and expand on one's initial beliefs and views.

Edward McFayden

Basic Writing

Opinion Essay

May 6, 2013

Educating Our Society

There is a lot of controversy over the age at which a person should be allowed to drink alcohol. For example Karen Arnold-Burger, author of the article "Maintaining the Legal Drinking Age of 21 Curbs Underage Alcohol Abuse," argues that alcohol related crashes and fatalities have decreased since raising the drinking age. On the other hand Radley Balko, author of the article, "Let My Students Drink," argues that presidents of many colleges believe that raising the drinking age has led to reckless consumption of alcohol by underage students. In my opinion the legal drinking age should remain at twenty one.

First of all, young adults are not mature enough to make good decisions about the consumption of alcohol. In her article Arnold-Burger writes, "Those under the age of 25 are more likely to engage in thrill seeking activity, and less able to appreciate the consequences of risky behavior"(1). I almost became a victim of some of this thrill seeking activity when I was on the way home from school one night. I passed a car that was doing 35 miles per hour in a 50 mph speed limit zone and soon found that the car that I passed sped up behind me and put on its high beams. I was followed for over half an hour. I didn't want them to follow me to my house so I turned down some side streets that I knew, just to make sure. I then used my cell to call the

Ipswich police station and told the officer what was going on and where I was located. Before I knew it, a police car was right behind us. The car that was

tailing me was pulled over by the police. I continued to the police station where I soon learned that the teen driver was charged with DUI.

Another reason to keep the drinking age at twenty one is that some younger drivers feel they are experienced drivers and that a few drinks will not hinder their ability to drive. While some evidence states that leaving the drinking age at twenty one has decreased the number of alcohol related traffic accidents other studies have shown that it has actually increased due to the reduced age of 18. In the article, "The Minimum Legal Drinking Age Should be Lowered," Michelle Minton writes, "banning the purchase of alcohol between the ages of 18 and 21 actually *increased* traffic fatalities of those between the ages of 18 and 24 by 3 percent"(2). She also writes, "findings lend credence to the "experienced drinker" hypothesis, which holds that when people begin driving at 16 and gain confidence five years before they are legally able to drink, they are more likely to overestimate their driving ability and have less understanding of how alcohol affects their ability to drive"(2). As a parent I can attest to the experienced drinker hypothesis. My daughter Melyssa lent her car to a friend so he could drive one of the girls home from a house they were staying at. He ended up totaling the car sometime in the early morning hours. We are still not sure if her friend was drinking at this house or went drinking before returning the car. He was arrested for DUI.

Finally, the effects of alcohol abuse at a young age contribute to health problems later on in life. Like anything in excess you end up paying the price at some point. In the article, "Higher minimum legal drinking ages linked to lower rates of suicides and homicides later in life," it states, "A number of adverse consequences were associated with lower drinking ages during the time periods that those laws were in effect, including elevated rates of suicide and homicide"(3).

It also states that data from 1990-2004 U.S. Multiple Cause of Death files "contained records on more than 200,000 suicides and 130,000 homicides for individuals who turned 18 between the years 1967 and 1989, the years during which legal drinking ages were in flux"(3). This data is very disturbing to me. We have to take a serious look at this data and do something about prevention. My wife and I spoke to each of our daughters about alcohol and drug abuse before they entered junior high school. We thought that this was good enough until my daughter Melyssa who made the varsity track team as a freshman began to hang around with her older teammates. Before we knew it, she came home one night a little happier than normal and cautious at the same time. We knew something was up so we kept an eye on her for a while and then sent her to bed. The next day I pulled out the student handbook and highlighted three things that I wanted her to read. We sat down and as she read the highlighted paragraphs she began to cry. I told her these are only the consequences that the school can invoke, but the long term effects of alcohol can be devastating to a person and their family. I told her she had a bright future if she stuck to academics and athletics. She is now in college and is doing well, but I still worry about her.

Despite what information is out there to keep the minimum drinking age at twenty one, there are still advocates who strongly believe that the age to drink should be lowered to eighteen. For example, "Eighteen year olds can vote, smoke, marry, drive, fly, pay taxes, take out loans, hold public office, serve on a jury and fight for their country"(Arnold-Burger 1). Although these are all valid arguments to support lowering the drinking age, society as a whole is missing the boat on the real issue.

We as a society need to end this debate. We need to look at ourselves and make a concerted effort to change our attitudes about alcohol consumption as well as being accountable

to our younger population about this problem. I believe that college presidents who are members of the Amethyst Initiative have some good ideas about educating our young adults about the effects of alcohol. I also believe that they do not want the responsibility to enforce the minimum drinking age because there is just too much to try to enforce on a college campus. We need to educate our children about the long-term effects of alcohol, not when they get to college, but as part of an ongoing education initiative from both the home and through the schools in which they attend. From the time students enter junior high school this should already be a mandatory subject as they are now under more pressure by older students to fit in. Society needs to change, not the laws.

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Brett Thomas

Basic Writing

Opinion Essay

December 11, 2012

Don't Raise the Dropout Age

Most people think that if you're a high school dropout, then you must not have made an effort or were careless when it came to school. In the article "Dropout Follies," the author Ronald A. Wolk writes, "Students leave school for various reasons including: problems at home, personal crises such as pregnancy, and unstable school conditions. Not one of these problems is addressed simply by keeping kids for another two years" (4). I can say that I agree with Wolk. Massachusetts should not just put a law into effect without considering the needs of students. In my opinion, I believe Massachusetts should keep the legal dropout age at sixteen.

There are students that drop out of high school, not because they are careless or lazy, but for a good reason. Sometimes students are in a predicament that leaves them no choice but to leave school. For example, some may have to drop out to care for their younger siblings while for whatever reason, their parents cannot. I remember being in the ninth grade; my friend Jocelyn was the most serious and hardworking student I knew. Jocelyn had to leave school because she had to take care of her mother who was bedridden with cancer. I remember her telling me that they couldn't afford an at home health care service to care for her mother while she attended school. Her father had passed away and she had no support from anyone else. It seems like some students would have to suffer because not due to their own fault, their situations are defined differently. We should not raise the dropout age to eighteen.

Moreover, I think the dropout age should stay at sixteen because there are sometimes unstable school environments. Good structural school environments are very important in the learning process and in the school experience. When you have students who are serious about school, who work hard to get a good education, there are always other students who don't care. Students like these lead to class disruptions and could have an impact on the education of others. Bullying and harassment of students is another serious issue that has led students to drop out or a lot worse. I remember back when I was in the ninth grade, the oversized class rooms, the crowded halls and the teachers' frustration over not being able to teach all the students properly. In the article "The True Cost of High School Dropouts," the authors Henry M. Levin and Cecilia B. Rouse write, "reformers focus their dropout prevention efforts on high schoolers; replacing large high schools with smaller learning communities…smaller learning communities' students can get individualized instruction" (A31). I agree with what the authors said in this article. It could improve many of the flaws in the school education, lowering the dropout rate. If the drop out age were raised, a possible solution could be to have certain alternative school options in place for situations like these. For example, if students do not want to attend school, and they're causing problems, they should be sent to an alternative school, an alternative school that would be equipped to handle such situations. If such actions were taken, then I could probably change my opinion on whether to raise the drop out age to eighteen.

Furthermore, there are students who find that high school isn't the right choice for them. If a student feels like they want to choose a different route in their education and have the option to do so, and then they should be able to. Ronald A. Wolk states in the article "Dropout Follies", "Dropouts are often brighter and more motivated than many of the students who stay in school. They leave school because they feel they're wasting time. Most of them pass the General

Educational Development exams, and most outperform at least 40 percent of today's high school seniors on standardized tests" (4). Again, I agree with Wolk. I've met people and have friends that dropped out because they felt that high school wasn't suited for them. A few friends of mine left school at the age of sixteen because they felt it was better to get a G.E.D and move on to college education. One person in particular is my friend Zach. After attending a community college for two years, he then transferred to a university eventually getting his masters in audio engineering. Now he is very successful and makes an income of $75,000 to $80,000 a year. In my opinion high school isn't for everyone, because of this we should leave the drop out age at sixteen.

Raising the drop out age from sixteen to eighteen doesn't seem like it would solve the underlying issues that force students to drop out. Politicians and school boards think that students drop out just because they want to, but that's not always the case when students drop out. I can understand where they stand on this issue. In my opinion, I'm not exactly sure what the perfect solution is. Instead of just raising the dropout age to eighteen, they should really consider the students' needs beforehand.

Overall, I think that Massachusetts should keep the dropout age at sixteen and not raise it to eighteen. If Massachusetts were to raise the legal high school dropout age from sixteen to eighteen, then I think it should have alternative school programs set up for the students who feel high school isn't the right choice for them. The only problem that would prevent these programs is the funding for these extra efforts. I feel that schools would fail to acquire the funds to institute these programs. In my opinion, we should not deprive the students from the right to drop out, even at the age of sixteen when we don't know the reason behind that controversial choice, and when our schools don't have these funds. We should not raise the dropout age to eighteen.

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Nicole Stanley

Basic Writing

Opinion Essay

July 31, 2012

Text Generation

In the debate over teens texting, the issue of it being beneficial or harmful for teenagers has been raised. On the one hand Natalie Smith, author of the article, "Luv to Text" argues that there are many ways texting can be beneficial for teens. On the other hand Katie Hafner, author of the article, "Texting May be Taking a Toll," uses many references to dispute that texting may not be beneficial. It may even be harmful for teens. I am a substitute teacher at Salisbury Elementary School, and I have worked with young teens. I can see the effect text messaging is having on them and my opinion is that text messaging is not beneficial for teenagers.

One way texting is not beneficial for teens is that texting can create anxiety in teens. In my experience, teenagers are so dependent on knowing what is going on in their peers' lives. For example, when substitute teaching at the Salisbury Elementary School I would constantly overhear the young teens bickering over friends not answering messages they had sent them. In her article, "Texting May be Taking a Toll," Hafner cites psychotherapist Michael Hausauer, who explains how this anxiety is created among teenagers. Hausauer says teenagers have a "terrific interest in knowing what's going on in the lives of their peers, coupled with terrific anxiety about being left out of the loop" (Hafner 2). Hausauer is saying that teens are using text messaging as a tool to obtain constant knowledge about their peers' lives. The constant flow of

messages creates fear or anxiety of not knowing what is going on with their peers, giving teens a left out feeling. I would agree that text messaging can cause great anxiety for teens.

Another reason why I do not believe text messaging is beneficial for teens is texting can be very distracting for teenagers. While covering six grade classes during the teachers' lunch period, I would see students texting instead of doing their silent reading. In my opinion, the majority of teenage students would admit to texting during class. I believe this is putting a strain on their grades and distracting them from learning. In her article, Hafner cites teenage texter, Ari Kapner. Kapner explains how she texts during class. Ari says, "You pretend you're getting something out of your backpack" (Hafner 3). In other words, most teenagers are spending classroom time trying to discretely text their peers, instead of focusing on their school work. Texting causes major distraction and deters teens from completing their school work.

Finally, I believe that text messaging among teens may be negatively affecting the way adolescents are developing socially. Before text messaging, adolescents would begin to separate socially from their parents and start making their own choices. My aunt has teenage boys, and they are constantly using text messaging to their advantage. For example, her oldest son recently signed up for classes at North Shore Community College and while he was there he was informed that a class he intended on taking was no longer available. He immediately grabbed his phone and texted his mother, "What should I do mom?" Technology has made it very easy for teens to mentally never leave their parents' side. In her article, Hafner cites a professor, Sherry Turkle. Professor Turkle explains how adolescents are not breaking away from their parents socially. Professor Turkle states, "but if technology makes something like staying in touch very, very

easy, that's harder to do; now you have adolescents who are texting their mothers 15 times a day, asking things like, 'should I get the red shoes or the blue shoes?'"(Hafner 2). Professor Turkle is saying that teenagers are no longer forced to make their own decisions. This is a part of life that helps adolescents develop socially. There is now a never ending lifeline connecting teens to their parents; parents who continue to make decisions for them. This is not allowing adolescents to become autonomous adults.

Overall, I feel text messaging is not beneficial to teens and if not moderated may continue to negatively affect teens. Texting is causing anxiety, has been proven to be a serious distraction, and may be linked to a negative change in the way adolescents are developing socially. This is a serious matter that I believe most people are not aware of. I think it's safe to say text messaging is here to stay, but it's not too late to educate teens on the negative effects it is having on their generation, a generation of text messagers.

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Nikita Espinal

Basic Writing

Portfolio Essay

December 12, 2012

Putting My Thoughts into Words

"Writing for me is like doing dishes, I don't like it but it has to be done." That is what I said on the first day of Basic Writing. I knew I was going to have to write often, but when I realized how many journals I was going to have to write and all the essays I began to dread the class. But the more and more I wrote, the more I began to appreciate writing. Writing allowed me to write about my feelings and think about things that I had never thought about before. This class helped writing become easier for me and now I am beginning to enjoy it. If they prompted me again with, "Writing for me is like..." I would finish it differently. This time I would say that writing for me is like expressing myself by putting my thoughts into words. The three methods that have been the most influential in improving my writing have been prewriting, journaling, and adding details.

One method that has greatly helped me become a better writer is prewriting. Before this class, I would just start writing my paper and if an idea came to me before it fit into my paper, I would quickly write it down on a separate sheet of paper or type it further down on my Word document. I guess I did my own form of prewriting in a way. This class taught me to organize my thoughts down on a sheet of paper before I start writing, and I have found that this method really helps. Now, whenever I am going to write an essay, I write down three reasons for each of my body paragraphs to turn into topic sentences, and I try to write down at least one reason to

support each of the three topic sentences. Once I have finished with that, I try to come up with a thesis statement that will connect with all three topic sentences and their reasons. Once I have finished these steps, I start writing my paper. This method really helps because I can just type what I already have written down and then add on to that.

A second method that helped me become a better writer was the journals. I have never written as often as I did for this class, and a big part of the class was writing the journals. We had to write five pages every week and most of the time I could write about whatever I wanted, so that was when I started to write about different things. For example, I had never put into words how much I love my mom, sister, and music. Then, I was able to write a whole essay about my mom for the person essay. I wrote about my sister many times in my journals, and I wrote about my violin for the object essay. This helped me to really appreciate them and music, and that is something that I will always be grateful for.

One last point on how this class helped me become a better writer is the way it made me think about details. The first few essays I have gotten back, though accepted, all said that they needed to have more detail added to them. Adding detail was the hardest thing for me to do because I always felt like I had added enough, but there was always something else I could add. For example, for the person essay I had described my mom with what I thought was enough detail. When I got it back though, they still wanted me to go even further with the details that described her. I even had to include what she smells like and what sound she makes when she walks around the room. After I finished adding more detail, I was happy with what I had come up with. I especially liked the part where I said, "What amuses me is that she really takes prides in her nose. She calls it "the Bodden nose" because she got it from her dad, but to me it is a regular nose with a slight bump on the bridge." I feel like throughout the semester I have gotten

better at providing details. Being able to use details to express myself through my writing gives me a great feeling of accomplishment because it makes me realize that I am putting what I have learned to practice.

In conclusion, when I think about how much prewriting, journaling, and adding details have improved my writing, I realize how much I have benefitted from taking Basic Writing. I thought that I would not benefit much from this class, but I have learned that there is always something you can learn. I have gained more than just becoming a better writer from this class. I have learned to appreciate the things around me and learned to think deeper than what is just on the surface. This class has helped change my opinion about writing. Thanks to this class, now I can truly say that writing for me is like expressing myself by putting my thoughts into words.